

Minor: This is the end of the set of fifty-two slides. I'm going to ask Mr. Jones to tell us a little bit about what his position was in the city at the time of the tornado and what his role was in the days immediately after the tornado.

Minor: What was your title?

Jones: My title in Waco was City Engineer. The Mayor had at a meeting Monday--or Tuesday--morning with General Desusway, the Army commander of the ? area and some of the former councilmen, the city manager and myself met in the First National Bank in Waco. We had no civil defense organization. We had one Civil Defense director that went around carrying an empty briefcase full time. But the Mayor pointed to the City Manager and said, "You keep track of any offer of help in here." Pointed to a former City Councilman, and he said, "You keep track of any equipment that's offered." And he said that you will be--I will be in charge of all rescue work--digging the bodies out. So that was our organization.

Minor: You were in charge of rescue?

Jones: Right, I was in charge of all rescue.

Minor: So how did you organize that?

Jones: Well, when we first got started we had our, all of our replacements(?) from the military just ganged around the Dentist Building. And some civilians in there too.

Minor: Now, this is Tuesday morning?

Jones: Tuesday morning.

Minor: This tornado occurred Monday afternoon?

Jones: Monday afternoon, and Monday night and Tuesday morning we got ten inches of rain. And of course that amplified that sand, brick and lime mortar.

Minor: Well, now, there was people working over Monday night, but they were kind of ad-hoc.

Jones: Harum-scarum. They were running and they--the most important thing we set up, and the first thing was a cordoned (?) guard around the area. People were almost fighting to get in, to get downtown. But we had to keep people out. There was about two streets that led into the downtown area, and almost all the streets in the downtown area were cluttered with debris or blocked. But Monday night, that that they hauled off, they put all the rubble and the timbers into an area close to the water treatment plant there in Waco, and then tried to cover it, but it continued to catch on fire for a long time. It had never--it should never combine materials taken from such a disaster as this. Your timber and your rubble. Your spontaneous combustion is going to set off that timber and it's a fire you cannot put out. We had a fire in an old sanitary landfill that was created in World War I in Waco, it was out on the, it was off a new road. And every now and then that old sanitary landfill would catch on fire and it'd take millions of gallons of water to put out that fire. Now it had been there since 1918. So don't ever put--mix--materials. Put your lumber in one place and your rubble in another.

Minor: Well, how long did this rescue operation go on then, Tuesday, Wednesday ...

Jones: The rescue operation went on and the Mayor finally ordered the people could come back in the town Saturday morning. I got eight hours sleep from Monday morning to Friday.

Minor: When was the last person found alive?

Jones: That was about Wednesday, I believe. It, I believe the last one was--one came out of that Dentist Building. There's a man that said that he was in the stairwell--stairway--of the Amoco building right across the street from the Dentist Building, and he said that he was thrown from one side of the staircase to the other. That building had been racked so much that the elevator would not run on the rails.

Minor: Yeah, I've heard about that.

Jones: So... It was racked, I mean... but it stood there...

Minor: Was it reinforced concrete?

Jones: No, I think it was structural...

Minor: Structural steel.

Jones: Yeah, I think it was. But it was an old, old building. That building was very old. I'd say early 1900's. But we organized by getting the people that were standing on the shift getting ready to go to work, getting them about two blocks away from our major disaster, around the Dentist Building. That was where the most debris was blocking things off, was just in that area from about, I think it was about Fifth Street down to City Hall. But in... we kept these people off and

then would bring in a shift and take a shift away, and we tried to mix very little our civilian employees and our military employees. We had a colonel in charge of every shift and got good cooperation out of them--they weren't hard to deal with. Now we had people coming in that were--well, had one man to come in say that he was out of my office, out of the City Engineer's office, and he would inspect their building for so many dollars. And it took us a little while before we found him, but we put him in jail for the duration. He didn't work for me anymore! He wasn't from my office; he had no authorization to speak. The Salvation Army was completely broke and--Tuesday morning. The Red Cross finally wandered in there about Wednesday.

Minor: Well now I understood you set up the command post, those, away from downtown somewhere. Is that right?

Jones: Well, the command post was in the First National Bank Building.

Minor: Well, that's not far.

Jones: It was across to the Dentist Building. The telephone ran in about I think seven miles that we could call anywhere in the United States. Those lines were woven. I had people calling my house because they couldn't get in touch with me. The telephone company manager tried to call my house and he couldn't get the call through. See, I'd been call--asking for a private line as City Engineer, and they said they just couldn't give it to me, so after trying for about an hour to get my wife, he called next door and got my wife to come next door so he could tell her about--so she could tell him about some calls she had received there at home. See we had offers of equipment from



from as far off as St. Louis. People would bring in equipment, your grade-alls and an instrument like that with rubber tires-- those rubber tires didn't last too long, they were cut by (?) We completely used up the supplies that the city of Waco had, in trying to keep equipment rolling. Oil company (?) tank trucks in there with gasoline and you just drove up and they filled your car with gas, no questions asked.

Minor: Yup.

This is end of tape on Waco tornado.